

Original 10 Pilot Counties MRS Meeting
Friday, April 28, 2006
Alamance Agricultural Extension

Counties Present: Alamance, Bladen, Buncombe, Franklin, Guilford, Nash, Transylvania.

Agenda

Announcements

Balancing Family Centered Practice with getting a through assessment.

Training Needs

How to sustain and grow the changes we have made.

Finding the whole family in need of services vs only some children.

Announcements

- Patrick has taken Tony's position as the MRS Coordinator.

Balancing FCP with getting a through assessment

- Bladen When this came up at the last meeting they felt that sometimes workers were using FCP as a cop-out. They would say they did not want to get into certain issues with the family because they didn't feel it was family centered. A lot of this problem at the time was new workers and some supervisor turnover. Now they have established a chain of command.
 - Don't feel it is as much of an issue at the current time. Now that they are actually getting into the issues, they feel like they are getting better results.
- Perhaps referring to family centered as family friendly was a disservice. You can be family centered but there are still issues that you have to discuss with them.
- Alamance feels that they don't really have this problem because assessors are more holistic and they get difficult information anyway. The worker tries to develop a family centered rapport and once you have broken down barriers of communication and come across with a respectful approach, the families will tell you things, including difficult things, sometimes more than you even wanted/needed to know.
- Some of the other counties have felt that if there is a disagreement between what the social worker and the family think about items on the safety and risk assessments, that the SW can't go against the family on the assessment.
 - Alamance has a system where if for example, the family says there is no SA problem, but they believe there is, the SW indicates that there is a problem, but they document why and talk about it with the family.
- At the original trainings there were a lot of mixed messages around family centered versus family friendly. Think it was confusing for a lot of people.

- Don't know if this is still an issue in the training, but if it is, ought to look at this piece and perhaps be more clear. Where did family friendly come from anyway? These original 10 did not use that term. Need to stop using this term. Bottom line, no matter if you are at their house, there is a valid CPS report, and you do have the same responsibilities and authority that you did before.
- Believe that you actually do families a disservice by not being firm and up front with them. Then they are involved in the CPS system longer, may end up taking their kids, and that did not do them any favors. Being family centered includes holding people accountable for their actions.
- Some people think that now you only have to be family centered if you are doing a family assessment, that forensic assessments are done just like they were before. That is not so. You can be family centered in the forensic assessments, and should be, but there is not really as big a difference between the two as people may think. (See how this is addressed in training.)
- Need to make sure that folks are clear when they go to Cornerstone, that is not policy training. That is practice training. Workers can't expect the contractors who do this training to be able to answer their policy questions. Either the trainers can't answer them, or they try and counties are shopping for answers.
 - CPRs requested that when policy questions come up, could the trainers let them know where they are coming from? Don't have to mention specific names, but just what county it comes from.

Do you make child specific findings or do all children in the family?

- Guilford, Transylvania could do both, depends on the situation
- Alamance forensic is specific to the victim, family assessment is the whole family
- Franklin, Nash, Bladen child specific
- Buncombe used to do the whole family, trying to be more child specific.
- If you find the whole family in need of services, you have to have on your case plan items that address the issues for each child. You must be able to show a specific need for each child.

How do we move forward?

When you start there is so much attention paid to the dual track because that is a huge change at first, but how do we permeate MRS through the entire involvement with the family. How do we get to the place where we talk about it when developing case plans, etc.

- Have to make 215, CFT, Shared Parenting as much a focus as the assessments. Soon after the original 10 started, case management and foster care workers were frustrated because they felt like all the emphasis

was on assessments and no one was concerned about the rest of the assessments.

- Still don't feel that the MRS approach has permeated their entire agency.
- What does Holly need to do? Do we need training, focus the monthly meetings on them or what?
- Are their counties that have done case management, or foster care very well, that could take the lead on getting that out there?
- Be sure to keep all areas in focus at the meetings. Holly asked that people have to mention issues and concerns at the meetings so that it will get out there.

Shared Parenting

- Nash emphasizes Shared Parenting from MAPP and all the way through working with people that want to be foster parents. They had the MAPP person go to the Train the Trainer class and then train the foster parents. They talk with them up front about their fears. Why don't you want those people (biological parents) in your home?
- The foster care workers have to be on board, and they have to believe that it is possible.
- Need to have some trust between the agency and the foster parents. If you have disrespected them before, they are not likely to trust you. Sometimes need to be up front with foster parents. They think they are hidden, but if the kid can use the phone, the biological parents know where they are anyway. Don't have to meet at the house though, can do it at McDonalds, or the agency.
- Sometimes you may need to select out and some people may not be appropriate for foster parents.
- Have to make sure that the social workers are presenting things in a family centered way. If the social worker talks about every bad thing that the birth parent has ever done, why in the world would the foster parents want to have anything to do with them?
- People think about developing a relationship in terms of what it can do for them. If we can present Shared Parenting to foster parents from the perspective of what it can do for you, instead of you gotta do this for someone else, it will be received better. For example, shared parenting will help the child have a better adjustment to this change, and he/she will have fewer behavioral issues and emotional concerns.
- Holly asked for people to email success stories that she can put in the MRS newsletter and those could be passed on the foster parents.
- Kinship care placements have a unique perspective on shared parenting because often they are already doing it even though they don't call it that.
- Thinks there needs to be some sort of basic training on Shared Parenting for everyone. In some counties the CPS worker is the one that takes the child to the foster home, they need some training.

- Have a lot of issues with judges. Sometimes the adjudications will take 9 months to a year because mom doesn't show up to court and the judges will allow that many continuances.
- Everyone thinks that DSS attorneys need to have training because some of them are trying to make social work decisions, and they are in the mindset of the punitive old school way of doing things.
- Buncombe had a meeting for judges where they fed them, showed the Video, through the Eyes of a Child, and talked about federal benchmarks. This has worked well for them, and they have much shorter times now. Judges will only grant continuances if it is really legit.

Case Management

- Alamance develops their case plans during the CFT. The ones that go to specific case managers are the forensic assessments. Two of the forensic assessors have gone to CFT facilitator training.

Other questions

Cases that are otherwise eligible to be family assessments but they require immediate response. Are folks taking them as family assessments?

- Everyone is taking them as family assessments if there is no other reason not to.
- People get too caught up in the idea that if you don't call them before you go out there it can't be family assessment. That is not true. If it is immediate, you may need to go on out there at once, but you can still deal with the family as a family assessment after that.
- There is not one way to do forensic, and one way to do family assessments. That is why it is called **multiple** response. There are multiple ways to do things, as long as safety is the first concern. (Think of it this way, what if there is no phone, does this mean you can't do family assessments? No.)
- Question if you had a case that was a dirty house which was an indication of a substance abuse, and you take it as family assessment, and call to make appointment, how much lead time do you give on the appointment. And, if the reporter calls back and wants to know why you called, you can educate them (and you may not be able to make this person happy and need to accept that.) This is hard for reporters to understand this, but at some point you can only do so much. Do the best you can.
 - You are not calling to catch them you are going to see what is going on. If she cleans up, then she knows it was wrong to have it that way, and they have acknowledged the problem. If they haven't done anything because she doesn't realize it was a problem. If the house is truly nasty they can't fix it within 24 hours before you come out. If substance abuse is an issue, it will come out in other ways.

Questions/concerns about policy?

Intake training

- In intake training they are being told that it is not appropriate to tell reporters that the family will be present when the social worker talks to the collaterals. Guilford is still doing it, telling the reporters. It is not in the policy manual in the intake section. Understand the distinction between professionals and community members, but the message from the training was that they were not supposed to tell them this.

Should foster care assessments be required to be forensic? Why are we treating them differently? Originally felt that they needed to track the substantiated foster parents.

- Worth taking a look at it.

When you take a transfer from another county, do they have to take it as forensic or can they change it?

- Usually by the time it is transferred it doesn't make sense to change the track even if they could.

Franklin is having issues with kinship care. Grandparent has been raising kids for years and it has never been a problem, but when trying to get mental health or school placement they won't take Grandparents signature on anything, and those agency call DSS and tells them they need to give legal custody. These families are ones that CPS is not even involved with. Grandmother is getting Medicaid for the child.

- Nash the attorney has helped them develop a power of attorney form. Mental Health won't take it though.
- The approach they have taken with the providers is that if you can bill Medicaid for this child, why can't you take their word for services?
- Alamance has identified two people in the school system that are willing to talk with families one on one to figure out how to manage this.
- Nash was thinking that we should get with WF and when the family first come to WF for services and the child is 1 year old, have them try to put things in place, when Grandma still knows where mom is. Not wait 3 or 4 years until we are trying to get the child in school or other services that by that time no one knows where Mom is anymore.

Training Needs

- Figuring out how to use family centered practice in forensic assessments.
- Foster Care workers.
- CPS workers need training on Shared Parenting (However, Holly mentioned that these get cancelled a lot, people need to sign up for it. It is out there but she can't make you take it.)

MRS Institute week of August 21st in Craven County.